

INFORM



URC

VAN ROAD

CAERPHILLY

December 2022 | January 2023

CHURCH OFFICERS

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An Elder writes ...

In May this year I had the idea of starting a Coffee Morning which the Elders agreed was a very good idea. So I went ahead unsure of how much help or support there would be but my prayers were answered. I am most grateful for the help I have had particularly from Hazel, Phyllis, Margaret and Mair.

A number of people have not been able to attend but have been very generous to the causes.

It has been rewarding to see people from the community attend, local and as far away as Blackwood, Cardiff and Bargoed. New faces as well as familiar ones. Perhaps word got around that there is homemade cake every time!

I am very pleased to say that we have raised £800 since we started in June and I have received lovely cards and letters from all the charities saying how much the donations are appreciated.

A reminder: December 7th, Coffee Morning in aid of The Deaf Children's Society.

There will be a Coffee Morning on January 4th. This seems a long way away but will be with us 'In the blink of an eye.' It is for Prostate Cancer which I know is close to the hearts of many people.

We are now in the first week of Advent and looking forward and using it as a time for reflection and preparation for Christmas. We look forward to decorating our homes, singing carols, being reminded of the Christmas story and the birth of Jesus in a stable far away.

Christmas is a time of joy, hope and peace, however, we reflect on such matters as Global Warming, Climate Change, the state of our country and others which are serious concerns. We must all do what we can.

My wish is that we give young people and children happy memories such as I was fortunate to have as a child (mind you, that was along time ago now.) I remember my nan washing out her old nylon stockings about 4 or 5 times before putting in an apple, pear and orange plus a few nuts, a new toothbrush, a notebook and pencil; not to forget the sixpence in the corner of a handkerchief.

On Christmas Day there was happiness all around. These days it has to be a pillowcase or 'Santa Sack' to fit all the toys, computers, phones, designer trainers etc. Will they have happy memories or will they be reminded of the hard times they went through because of the world as it is today?

We must do what we can for the less fortunate in our communities and pray that they may feel the love and hope of Christmas.

When all the festivities are over and we approach a new year with Hope! Hope that it will be better than 2022 with all its ups and downs (at times it felt like more downs than ups.) There were happy times and Good times for God is in our lives, listening to our prayers and in many ways, answering them.

A thought for today and always -

When the night is dark, Reach out for a star,
When the world disappoints you, Reach out for dreams,
When sadness surrounds you, Reach out for love,
And always, always -

Reach out in Hope!

Wishing everyone a joyous and peaceful Christmas and New Year!

Margaret B.



From the Editor

Sorry, No Change!

This was often said as I stood in Tesco with the bucket collecting for Christian Aid. This has been the refrain over the years wherever collecting, but now, with many people using cards to pay, there is less cash in wallets and purses.

It is interesting to see how individuals say ,’sorry, no change.’ Some stand near and search purses and pockets, some are very regretful, some look particularly embarrassed and rush away.

I always smile and reply, ‘That’s OK!’

What I really appreciate is when someone gives a donation, we exchange smiles; a brief connection is made. It is particularly pleasing when occasionally, someone will stop and chat ,perhaps about their own church or how they have collected in the past or maybe enquire about our church.

We collectors always appreciate a, ‘cheerful giver.’

So what of this coming Advent, Christmas and Epiphany?

Will things stay the same for us? Will we say, ‘Sorry, no change’ in our outlook and ways? Or will we take time to reflect more deeply and make changes in our lives that show appreciation of what God has done for us through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus

Are we, or can we become, ‘cheerful givers?’

Wishing you peace and joy.

Diane.



Young Wives

December

5th Christmas Meal
12th Carols and mince pies

No meetings then until
January 30th—Business and Biscuits



Fellowship and Bible Study

The last session of the year will be held on Thursday 1st December at 10.30 a.m., and we will resume on 5th January. Thank you to all those folk who have supported the sessions.

Mair



Worship



December

- 4th, 10.30 am Rev Malcolm Shapland
Communion (2nd Sunday in Advent)
- 11th, 10.30am Rev Gareth Dyer
(3rd Sunday in Advent)
- 19th, 10.30am Carol Service
(4th Sunday in Advent)
- 25th, 10.00am Mr Robert Moverley (Christmas Day)

January

- 1st, 10.30am Rev Malcolm Shapland
Communion
- 8th, 10.30am TBA
- 15th, 10.30am Lewis Lewis-Head
- 22nd, 10.30am TBA
- 29th, 10.30am Rev Robin Wood



Mid-month Communion

Wednesday 14th December, 10.30am
Wednesday 11th January, 10.30am
Rev. Malcolm Shapland
TBC

Lectionary Readings



December

- 4th
Advent 2 Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19;
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
- 11th
Advent 3 Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10;
James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11
- 18th
Advent 4 Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
- 25th
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14;
CHRISTMAS DAY Luke 2:1-20

January

- 6th
Epiphany Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14;
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
- 8th
Isiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-42;
Matthew 3:13-17
- 15th
Isiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42
- 22nd
Isiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23
- 29th
Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15;
1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12





CHURCH COFFEE MORNINGS

Wednesday 7th December

10.30am

In aid of The Deaf Children's Society

Wednesday 4th January

10.30am

In aid of Prostate Cancer

£2 (includes a raffle ticket)

ALL WELCOME!

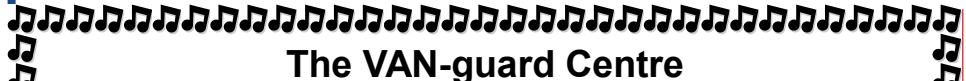


CAROL SERVICE—DEC 18th—10.30am

A carol celebration of Jesus' birth and will be similar to that of last year. So, it will not be a concert. We shall worship through a wide range of carols for all to sing accompanied by key verses from scripture. We also aim to have a small singing group in place so that there are a few breaks for any tired voices!

Come let us adore Him!

Peter



The VAN-guard Centre

Charity Registration number 1109193

December 2022- January 2023

As the year 2022 comes to a close we look back over an unusual year in the VAN-guard Centre. There have been successes and disappointments. Two groups came back in late 2021 while others resumed at various times during 2022. We lost one group and other returning groups suffered smaller attendances. Now however a few groups are experiencing new members, but there is still sadness that there are folk we have lost. We have changed the date of the Arts, Crafts and Literary Exhibition. It will now take place after Easter next year.

The Art Group has become an Art and Crafts Group. Some friends from the original Art Group cannot attend due to poor health and advanced years. We are grateful to church members who have come along and supported the fresh look group. We have spoken to colleagues involved in the voluntary sector and discovered that most have similar experiences.

Concerts resumed in July with a new venture for us viz. Cardiff Opera. We still have some faithful performers supporting us and hope that attendances will get back to pre-lockdown numbers. A recording company has held recording sessions for audition demos for singers.

Only Men Aloud still come along to rehearse and love being in the building. It is good to be able to offer the use of the building to various individuals and groups when the space is



vacant. It is a useful source of badly needed revenue which is beneficial to church and VAN-guard.

We are very grateful to Margaret Baldwin for her support at a few of the Coffee Mornings. The first donation was to support VAN-guard after a very lean period due to the pandemic. The November event provided a donation of £110.50 for Blood Bikes Wales. The money will start the fundraising for this vital service which supports the NHS, and which has been chosen as the charity for our annual David Hawthorn Memorial Gala Concert in 2023. There are other concerts also planned in 2023.

VAN-guard is still fortunate to be able to share the cost of cleaning the building. We share 50-50 with the church. From July to October of this year we contributed £260.00. This is in addition to room hire charges we pay to the church. The maintenance and insurance of the piano is also the responsibility of the Centre, and its use benefits the church. This support all depends upon a successful VAN-guard programme.

VAN-guard groups' involvement in local events in November.

We were delighted to be told that a wreath was laid at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday by Only Boys Aloud. The Community Chorus resumed its performance at the switching on of the Christmas lights in Caerphilly.

Invitation for Saturday 26th November

John and I received an invitation to attend the Civic Service for the Mayor of the Borough, Councillor Elizabeth (Liz) Aldworth at Penallta House.

December and January activities and events

Groups will continue until a week before Christmas and resume during the first week in January. U3A's December event will be its Christmas Social on 7th December and resume on 6th January. We wish the Community Chorus every success with its Christmas Concert which will be the first performance with its newly appointed music director. Saturdays in January will be used by Cardiff Opera for rehearsals.

Sunday evening 27th November at 7.00 p.m.

A night at the Opera

Mozart-Verdi-Bernstein-Sullivan- Korngold

An evening with five talented soloists and an accomplished pianist. Music will include extracts from the Magic Flute and other arias and ensemble excerpts. This is a fundraiser for Cardiff Opera. Come along and enjoy some excellent music performed by professional artists.

Tickets £15. Students and under 18-year-olds £5.00.

A weekend of Christmas events with splendid music by talented singers and musicians will complete the 2022 events at the VAN-guard Centre.

Friday 16th December at 7.00 p.m.

The Caerphilly Community Chorus Christmas Concert

Music Director Ms. Anna Beresford.

Tickets £5.00 children no charge.

Saturday 17th December at 1.00 p.m.

Caerphilly Wind and Strings.

Leader Mr. Nigel Jones.

The concert is in aid of the VAN-guard Centre.

Tickets £5.00

Sunday 18th December at 2.00p.m.

'Cantare at Christmas'

An afternoon of music, mince pies and festive cheer

A favourite Christmas event, it has become the tradition for Angharad Morgan, David Fortey with accompanist Ryan Wood to delight us with traditional Christmas music.

Tickets £10.00 refreshments included.

We hope many of you will be able to join us. There are posters on the notice boards in the church and leaflets in the ground floor hallway which provide more detailed information as well as in last month's issue of INFORM.

The VAN-guard Centre Committee is pleased to once again be able to wish all at the church a very happy Christmas and a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Mair.



CAERPHELLY FOOD BANK

If donating Christmas items such as mince pies and chocolate, please donate by early December as we need to pass them out in plenty of time before Christmas.

Box for donations at the back of the Church

Tinned fruit, tinned rice pudding, UHT milk, tea, coffee, biscuits, juices / squash, soup, tinned meat and fish, tinned vegetables, pasta / curry sauces.

At the Food bank we like to put in some 'extras' when we have them, for example -

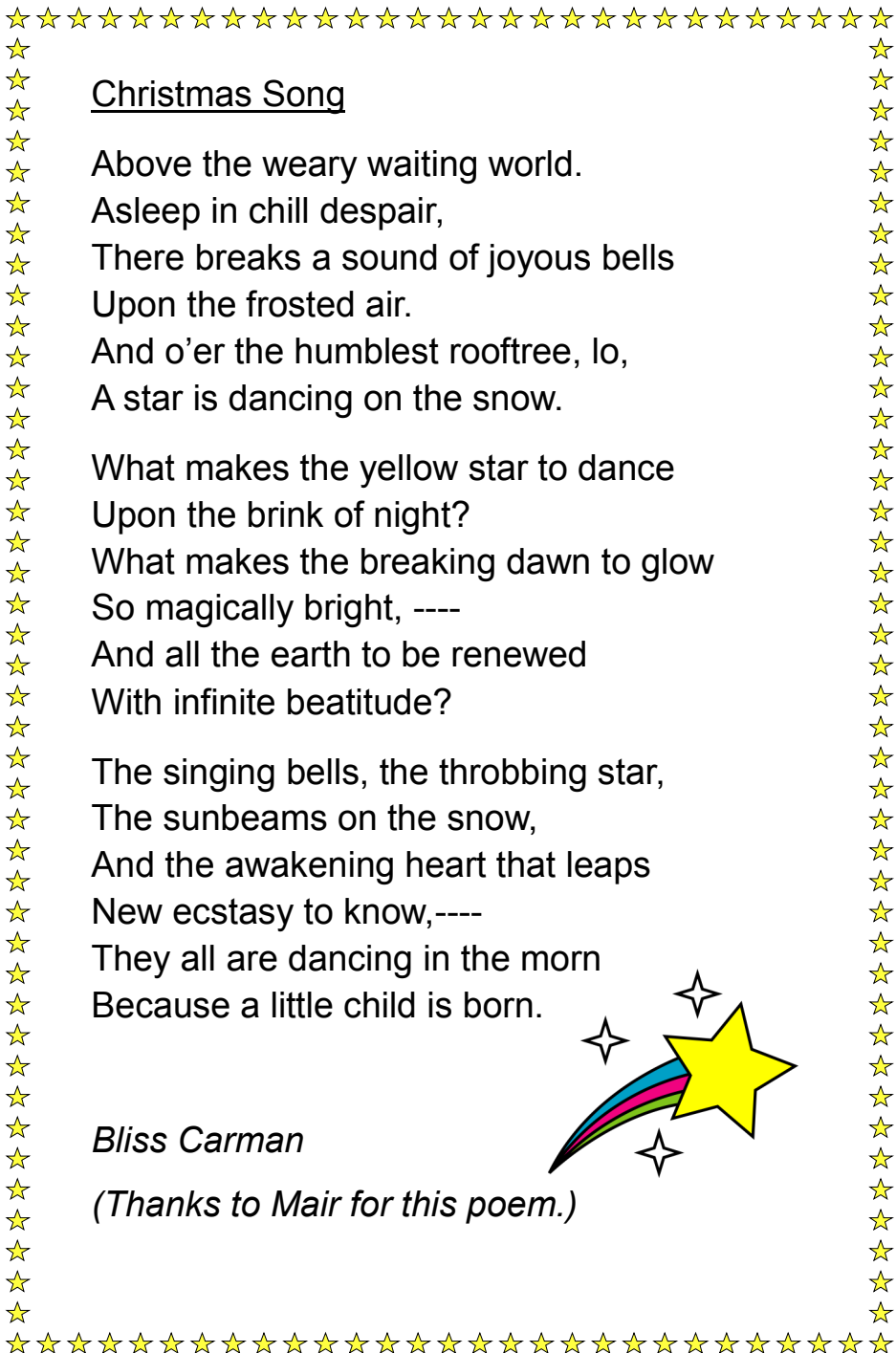
Shampoo, shower gel, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, chocolate / sweets.

Please note that Pasta and beans are not needed at the moment.

Carrier bags also needed.

THANK YOU!





Christmas Song

Above the weary waiting world.
Asleep in chill despair,
There breaks a sound of joyous bells
Upon the frosted air.
And o'er the humblest roof-tree, lo,
A star is dancing on the snow.

What makes the yellow star to dance
Upon the brink of night?
What makes the breaking dawn to glow
So magically bright, ----
And all the earth to be renewed
With infinite beatitude?

The singing bells, the throbbing star,
The sunbeams on the snow,
And the awakening heart that leaps
New ecstasy to know, ----
They all are dancing in the morn
Because a little child is born.

Bliss Carman

(Thanks to Mair for this poem.)



Christmas Cringes

Who delivers Christmas gifts to cats?

-Santa Paws

Where do elves go to cast their votes?

-The North Pole

How do you hire a horse?

-Stand it on 4 bricks

What falls at the North Pole and never gets hurt?

-Snow

Why did Rudolph get a bad grade on his report card?

-He went down in history



What Do We Get From Worship?

We are lucky in Van Rd to be offered worship from people with a range of backgrounds and skills, from full time and retired Ministers to people from our own congregation willing to lead worship. What works in worship for you? Have a think about a service that you attended recently that you liked. What was it about the service you liked? Write it down. Are you willing to share your thoughts with others? We may consider this in a future Church Meeting.

Rob

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

A	S	U	H	T	I	W	D	O	G	F	J
R	R	U	O	I	V	A	S	V	A	E	E
Y	E	M	A	N	U	E	L	I	L	C	S
P	V	J	H	O	P	E	T	E	N	E	U
N	H	O	O	L	C	H	O	E	A	M	S
E	G	Y	R	I	W	N	C	N	T	A	
M	Y	R	R	H	C	N	G	W	I	N	P
E	H	O	L	Y	I	E	G	J	V	G	H
S	J	R	N	K	L	V	O	E	I	E	E
I	M	R	N	S	K	S	L	V	T	R	C
W	A	A	K	J	E	S	D	O	Y	Y	A
D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S	L	W	I	E
F	Y	G	H	E	L	B	A	T	S	W	P

FRANKINCENSE NATIVITY SHEPHERD MARY
 JOSEPH ANGELS JESUS WISE MEN STABLE
 GOLD MYRRH MANGER REJOICE PEACE
 SAVIOUR LOVE EMANUEL FAITH HOPE
 GOD WITH US JOY HOLY NOEL

ECO BOX-DECEMBER—GREEN CHRISTMAS

For God so loved the world that he gave His only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.



(John 3:16)

Opening The Presence

If there is one time of year when our world groans under the pressure, then it is Christmas. From wrapping paper to wish-lists, trees made of plastic to transporting millions of tons of gifts, fairy lights to food waste, Christmas is the time of extravagance. So much food we cannot possibly eat, so many presents we did not need, maybe even want; more than £1 billion spent in the UK alone on Christmas cards, at a cost of 200,000 trees. Of course in the good ole days at least the world got a couple of days off when the roads went quiet, but nowadays even Christmas day, the motorways are full. We have not even mentioned the air miles travelled and not just visiting relatives. Your average proper Christmas dinner is calculated to have travelled a total of 260,000 miles to your table, unless you are sourcing everything locally.

Surely it is time to forget white and even blue Christmases and start dreaming of a greener Christmas. As we celebrate the birth of the infant Jesus, let us remember Paul's words from Romans 8:22

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved.”

Let us pray:

Loving God, you came to us, Emmanuel, with us, in the most humblest of ways: an upcycled feeding trough for a bed and a shed full of animals for a nursery. Help us to see and celebrate the humility of your birth, not with extravagance, but let us look to the interests of others in our world and the interests of creation.

Help us to follow your example, not grasping for yourself, but giving of yourself. Help us to make this Christmas more meaningful by having less, more special by making a difference and more spiritual by leaving alone the material.

Help us in Jesus' name.

Amen.



Get Active:

- If you have a plastic tree make it last a lifetime. If you are replacing it get a real live sustainable one.

- Only buy the food you will eat and look at where it has travelled from. Buy locally sourced food.

-If you have to send cards, send E-Cards or a WhatsApp message telling your friends that you bought a cow with the money you saved and you've left it in Africa.

-Buy recycled gifts, charity shop gifts, or UNICEF or other charity gifts.

Find Out More At -

Arocha.org.uk/our-activities/living-lightly-take-action

Sustainable Christmas Tips

Every pound we spend at Christmas is a vote for the world we want to create. Let's make our festivities friendlier for our planet.

We could start with presents ...

quality not quantity - ever received a gift you don't want and will never use?

gift an experience - reduce demand for physical resources and bring people together

think about materials - keep sustainability in mind

test you wrapping skills - avoid plastic ribbon and tape ... and glitter!

There's so much more we can think about, discuss and share together around food,

decorations, party outfits, winter walks and nature.

Why not visit these websites for some great Eco Christmas ideas:

WWF <https://www.wwf.org.uk/>

Friends of the Earth <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>

Greenpeace <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/>



ECO BOX—January 2023

Gardens

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden and he put the human he had formed in it. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:8,9)

Getting back to our roots

If there is one occupation that all human beings should be involved in it has to be gardening. Caring, tending, weeding, cultivating, it is in our DNA, it is where we belong. Strange then that the 21st century idea of a front garden is paving for parking. Look around your neighbourhood, see just how many front gardens that once were gardens are now carparks. This destruction of hedges, flowerbeds and trees so that we can park our pollution wagons is largely ignored as part of the problem, but the loss of habitat for birds and beetles, worms and weevils, moths and mice is incredible, particularly in our cities.

Furthermore, look at the trend for back gardens, patios, decking, hot-tubs and wicker furniture. It is time to get back to our roots, to return to the good garden God had planted. To get back to where we belong. Let the adjacent poem be an inspiration, for prayer and for planting. See what habitats you can create, what animals and birds you can befriend. "Then he took the human being and put them in the garden to work it and to care for it."

(Gen 2:15)

Let Us Pray

THE Lord God planted a garden
In the first white days of the world,
And He set there an angel warden
In a garment of light unfurled.
So near to the peace of Heaven,
That the hawk might nest with the wren,
For there in the cool of the even
God walked with the first of men.
And I dream that these garden closes
With their shade and their sun-flecked sod
And their lilies and bowers of roses,
Were laid by the hand of God.
The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth, –
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.



GET ACTIVE

The 'go-to' website for this month is -

ECOGREENLOVE

- Church gardens are wonderful wildlife spaces. Develop a more wildlife friendly church.
- Put in place bird boxes, hedgehog homes, bat boxes, insect hotels, composting areas.
- Have a wild flower area.



WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH?

Be one in a million - take part in **Big Garden Birdwatch**

In the last 50 years, 38 million birds have been lost from UK skies. The RSPB depends on your support to save nature and to look after places where nature can thrive. Join a million other people and count the birds you see in your garden or local park for one hour at the end of January. Sign up and get your free guide at

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>

www.comics.com

I DON'T THINK REPLACING A BAD BULB ON THE FIRST TRY IS REALLY A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE.

12/21 © 2010 Jeff Stahler/ Dist. by UFS, Inc.

Right, we've picked up the gold and the myrrh...what on earth is THAT?!

Christmas Prayer from 'The Lion Book of Children's Prayers'

Grant, Heavenly Father, that as we keep the birthday of Jesus

May He be born again in our hearts,

And that we may grow in likeness of the Son of God, who for our sake was born

Son of Man.

Did You Have a Good Christmas?

The waiting is the best of it,
The days the church calls Advent,
There is the hum of busyness,
The shops are crowded, streets lit bright,
Presents and cards and carols
Fill our common life
Until the Festival itself arrives, Midwinter's sleep,
And everything shuts down.
The city's daily links disintegrate.
Each family, each unit
Isolate,
Contracted like a sea anemone,
Essays to keep its private feast
To mark the time,
Or else endure it,
Cheerfully.



W.S Beattie

We hold in our prayers -

Frank and Phyllis Frayling
Rev Malcolm Shapland Diana Hibbert
Vernon Holland Barbara Lloyd
Carol Booth John and Mair Wade
David and Carolyn Jenkins Bill Mallon's family
Huw and Mary James and family
Judy and Rod Jarman Dennis and Shelagh Pollard
Margaret Webb
All those still affected in any way by Coronavirus in the UK, Europe and in developing nations.
All those working in the NHS and in Social Care.
Those who have lost their employment and those fearful for their jobs and struggling with the rising cost of living.
Those countries facing hardships, particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen and all those desperate for their safety and future, particularly the people of Ukraine.
Those people helping to welcome and settle refugees.
Charities such as Christian Aid as they set about helping those in need.



CHURCH ELDERS

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Dr Peter Speakman 02920 883968
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Mrs Margaret Baldwin 02920 867027

Any items for the next edition should be
submitted by the 19th of the month

to

Mrs Diane Moverley

dianemoverley60@gmail.com

(or if not on e mail then items can be left
in the box at the back of the sanctuary)



**Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this
thing that has taken place, which the Lord
has made known to us.**

Luke 2:14